

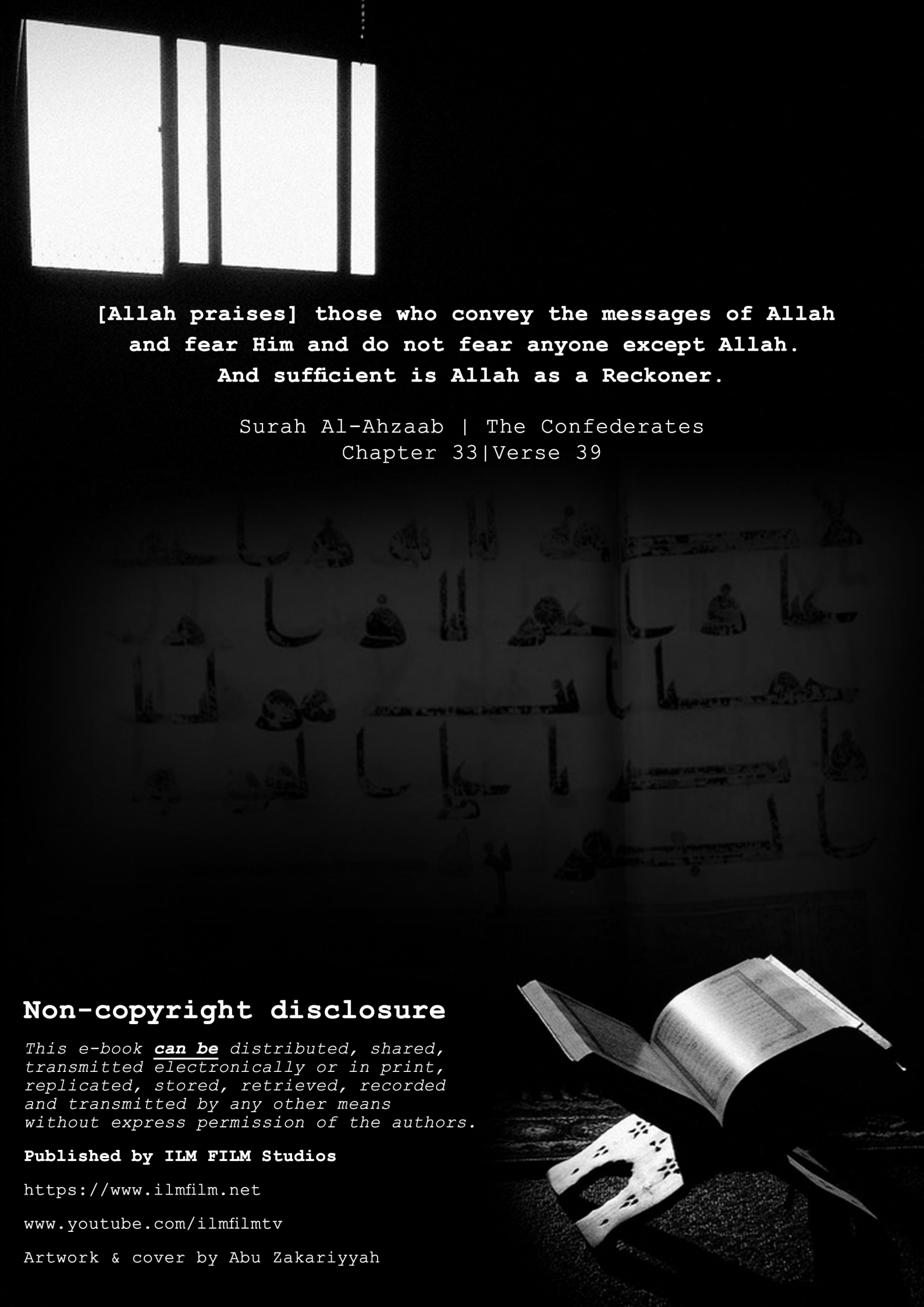


GREAT MUSLIM LIVES

VOLUME VII



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[Allah praises] those who convey the messages of Allah
and fear Him and do not fear anyone except Allah.
And sufficient is Allah as a Reckoner.

Surah Al-Ahzaab | The Confederates
Chapter 33 | Verse 39

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Contents page

Foreword

Abdelhamid Ben Badis

(1889 - 1940), Honour is ours

Shehu Usman Dan Fodio

(1754 - 1817), Empire Builder

Sayyid Abul 'Alaa Maududi

(1903 - 1979), Let us be Muslims

Dr. Fazlur Rahman Khan

(1929 - 1982), Towering Ambition

Prime Minister Mohammad Natsir

(1908 - 1993), Equilibrium

Bibliography, References and Further Reading

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Foreword

May the Peace and Salutations of Allah be upon our beloved Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم)
The Trustworthy, The Final Prophet and Messenger of Allah.

“Until the lion learns to speak, the tales of the hunter will be told”

They remind us of our defeat, our degradation and our deviation from the pathways of progress, piety and prosperity. In such times it may be difficult to draw inspiration and find courage in our identity as contemporary Muslims, however history reminds us that Islam has always been strengthened and supported by men and women of integrity, virtue and of exemplary accomplishments.

It is with a heart full of optimism, hope and love for Al-Islaam that we present to the reader a rich catalogue of contemporary biographies, each one recounting the life and legacy of a great Muslim personality.

Collectively, all of our subjects have demonstrated outstanding will and determination to cherish and champion the legacy and beauty of Al-Islaam in its purest form.

ABDELHAMID BEN BADIS (1889 - 1940)

HONOUR IS OURS

PARIS IN AFRICA

Algeria, the Northern frontier that crowns the African continent – stretching along the vast expanse that connects the Mediterranean coastline to the golden dunes of the Sahara desert.

In this land, countless treasures are buried of a history full of proud accomplishments from the magnificent cities built by the Roman Empire to the enchanting and winding streets reminiscent of the golden rule of the Ottoman Caliphate and the famous Neo-Byzantine basilica, also referred to as the *Notre Dame of Africa*.

Yet beneath this veneer of rich cultural tapestry and a cacophony of Franco-Arab dialects, is hidden a painful and delicate history of struggle and the heroic pursuit of self-determined rule, cultural identity and spiritual sovereignty.



Over the period of a century, between 1830 to 1930 the people of Algeria were subject to a variety of trials and tribulation at the hands of their French conquerors. In an act of symbolic triumph and domination over the country and its people, the French occupiers staged a grand celebration commemorating the anniversary marking one hundred long years of domination over the native sons and daughters of Algeria.

Unlike the ancient Roman rule in the region, France especially took pride in knowing that in just under a century, her customs and ideology had settled so deeply into the hearts and minds of many Algerian intellectual and elites - that many were convinced of Algeria's filial loyalty to the fatherland. As preparations for the grand ceremony began to actualize, invites were dispatched to dignitaries across the world for what was promised to be a six month long celebration in Algeria. Such was the pride and confidence of the French administration that Cardinal Lavignerie, one of France's leading politicians dared to declare the following statement;

"Do not mistake the purpose of this celebration. It is not to commemorate one hundred years of French presence in Algeria. The Romans spent three centuries in Algeria but were eventually driven out. What we are celebrating is the funeral of Islam in this country! The era of the Crescent in Algeria is over."

ALGERIA'S RISING SON

Born in the year 1889 into a middle-class family, 'Abdel-Hamid bin Badis began his life in a picturesque little village situated near the city of Constantine, the cultural and commercial capital of eastern Algeria.

A direct descendent the Berber dynasty known as the *Zirids* whose dynastic rule can be traced back to the tenth century, 'Abdel-Hamid's family inherited a fine tradition of scholarship and intellectual brilliance. At the head of his household was his esteemed and accomplished father Muhammad ibn Mustafa bin Badis, a high ranking official within the French administration in Algeria.

YOUTH AND EXPERIENCE

As was customary in many parts of the Muslim world, the young child was entrusted to the capable and sagacious care of a religious teacher - Sheikh Hamdan al-Lounissi fulfilled this position and his wisdom and council were both admired and respected by his young disciple, 'Abdel-Hamid.

Knowledge of the Faith was at the time under severe restriction resulting from the relentless efforts of the French authority to uproot the language, culture and creed of Islam from the history of Algeria.

Upon his mentor's advice, the young 'Abdel Hamid bin Badis took the pledge to never employ his education and skills to serve the French administration.



STUDIES AT ZEITUNA

Following several years of traditional formation and classical training with his mentor, 'Abdel-Hamid bin Badis travelled to Tunis in the year 1908, in pursuit of higher learning.

He was subsequently enrolled at the very prestigious university of Al-Zaytuna, which was renowned for its exceptional curriculum and advanced sciences.

Among the formidable teachers and savants from whom the young man derived many of his principles and ideas during his four year stay at the university - were Sheikh Mohammed al-Nakhli whose orthodox principles and approach highlighted the urgency of rectifying the prevalent folklore beliefs and practices that were most common among the mass of under-educated and over superstitious village dwellers and nomadic tribes.



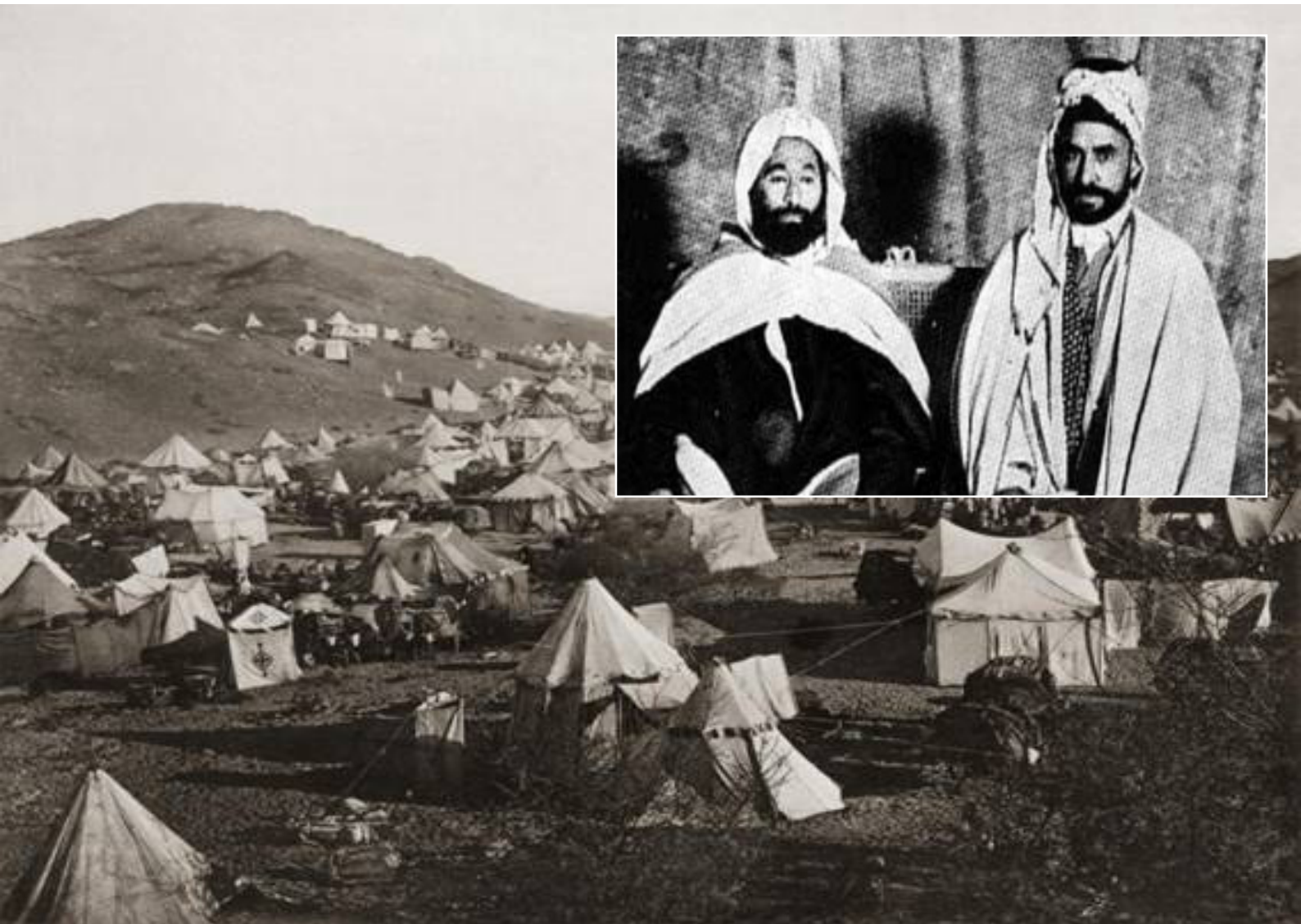
'Abdel- Hamid also drew inspiration and respect for the rich catalogue of Arabic meaning and expression from his discussions and interaction with the great Sheikh Muhammed al-Taher bin Achour. But perhaps what left the greatest mark on the heart and mind of the young student of knowledge was what he had learnt and adopted from the teachings of Sheikh al-Bachir Safer whose emphasis was on identifying and analyzing the weakness of the Muslim Ummah along with the remedies needed to lift the heavy blanket of ignorance, disgrace and subjugation at the hands of Western Imperialism.

THE PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA

Upon completing his course of studies in 1911 'Abdel-Hamid was awarded a certificate and authorized to teach, the following year he embarked on a journey through several Middle Eastern cities en-route to the sacred land where he performed the great Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca and delivered lectures in the Prophet Muhammad's Mosque (Salallahu 'Aleihi wa Sallam) in the enlightened city of Al-Madinah.

It was during the course of his pilgrimage to Mecca that 'Abdel-Hamid bin Badis met some of the Muslim world's most influential and outstanding leaders of the day, including the famous Islamic revivers and champions Sheikh Bachir al-Ibrahimi, Imam Shamil of Dagestan and Sheikh Husain Ahmed Al-Hindi - all of whom were impressed by bin Badis' competence and knowledge.

His pilgrimage had in fact kindled a flame deep within his heart that inspired and encouraged him to revive the call for an Islamic identity and the defence of the lofty principles of the faith upon his return to Algeria.



WORK IN ALGERIA AND CONTRIBUTION

Following his return to Algeria, 'Abdel-Hamid bin Badis settled in Constantine wherein he initiated his duties as a teacher and instructor at the Sidi Qammouch mosque.

There, the enthusiastic and charismatic young scholar addressed multitudes of men and women of from all walks of life, providing them with knowledge on the principles of Faith, Arabic language, literature and history.

Here, his ambitious streak reached grand proportions when he began to prepare for the establishment of an organisation which would unite and mobilize Islamic scholars and thinkers in the pursuit of revival and rediscovery.

BACK HOME IN CONSTANTINE

By the year 1924, he had been successful in assembling a group of intellectuals in Constantine. The task and objective of the newly formed society of thinkers took the initial form of incrementalism – wherein modest efforts were exerted towards the gradual reinstatement of the Arabic language, Islam Studies and scholarly commentary of the Noble Qur'an – this activity continued to bear fruit in and around Constantine's mosques.

In the year 1936, when following several years of laborious efforts and repeated obstacles, 'Abdel-Hamid bin Badis was successful in contributing towards the establishment of the *Algerian Muslim Congress*, however his efforts were sabotaged the following year when this congress was disbanded in the summer of 1937, but in the spirit of determination and indomitable faith, 'Abdel-Hamid bin Badis organized yet another association which came to be known as the *Association of Algerian Muslim Ulema*.

Though the work seemed futile given the prevalent societal factors at the time, the French had seriously underestimated the overarching objectives and vision of the newly formed think tank. Pleased with the notion that Algeria's people had been totally detached from their culture and religious identity, the French initially felt little need to counter the slow and limited progress of Sheikh bin Badis, however the tides were destined to turn when in the year 1938 Shaikh 'Abdel-Hamid bin Badis completed his explanatory seminars on the topic of the Noble Quran, his lectures and sermon on the subject lasted twenty five long years but upon completing the entire Quran the occasion was celebrated all over Algeria in what was to result in an entire week of festivities and happiness, this realization alarmed the French authorities prompting them to react.

His examination of the causes behind the Muslim world's rapid decline and stagnation revealed several internal factors among which he cited the growing disunity brought about by nationalism and despotism as well as the adoption of non-Islamic practices and Western ideology that contradicted the principles of Islam.

In his final assessment concerning the positive measures by which the faith could be reinstated as a central theme in the lives and cultural identity of his people, Abdel-Hamid bin Badis' solution included the education, reconstruction and rediscovery of the core Islamic principles upon which previous Muslim nations had built much of their achievements upon and without which the contemporary Muslim nation was to remain a subject of ridicule, pity and subjugation by external forces.



THE END OF AN ERA

On April 16th 1940, Sheikh 'Abdel-Hamid bin Badis died in his birthplace of Constantine. His funeral was attended by thousands of admirers and supporters.

Sadly, with Algeria's loss of this great champion came the rapidly infringing influence of the administrative powers, resulting in the rapid degeneration and deconstruction of the institutions once founded and invigorated by the great national leader.



What remains today of 'Abdel-Hamid bin Badis's legacy can be heard in the daily pledge recited by the pupils across numerous reformist religious schools, which went on to become the motto of independent Algeria:

"Islam is our religion. Arabic is our language. Algeria is our fatherland."

GREAT MUSLIM LIVES

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PAL

THE OLD SOCIETY

As time passed and the young scholar grew in wisdom and popularity, he emerged as an advocate for the return to orthodox Islam as was taught by his mentor and guide Sheikh Jibril ibn Umar. Usman Dan Fodio spent nearly twenty years teaching and preaching these principles in his hometown, attracting followers and making adversaries along the way, however the old establishment grew jealous and suspicious of him, resulting in a small band of clerics who decided to mount a smear campaign to malign and discredit the young scholar in the hopes of dissipating his efforts.

HAUSALAND

The Muslim inhabitants of Hausaland were like any other faith community throughout the ages, as rural life became more and more tainted by urban trends, the old customs were replaced by new cultural innovations while the purity of creed and the firm foundations upon which is built the authentic Muslim faith began to weaken and crumble under the crushing weight of eccentric practices and superstitious biases that had been plagiarised from local animist and pagan tribes.

Usman Dan Fodio and his followers grew concerned over the increasingly oppressive and corrupt practices of the ruling class and the misinformed and misguided rituals of the uneducated which resulted in such practices as the unorthodox dance known as *Bori* which was enacted to induce spirit possession which in turn popularised the services of many self-proclaimed voyeurs who boasted of knowing the unseen and commanding control of powerful Jinn.

As with the increasingly hedonistic practices of the local Muslim population, Usman Dan Fodio grew concerned and began to campaign openly against what he judged to be the proliferation of miseducation of the masses and abuse of scholarship especially with regards to the womenfolk and weaker members of society who suffered oppression at the hands of the educated and rich, who monopolised and restricted the channels through which one may attain a good and satisfactory level of education in life and religion.



SPEAKING THE TRUTH

The Sheikh took exception to these practices and wrote several treatise on the necessity and validity of female education, going as far as to establishing schools for women and dedicating weekly study sessions exclusively for the teaching and training of mothers and daughters, he also issued religious rulings to encourage female attendance despite the initial resistance of many male relatives.

Thus began the effort to spread the Da'wah and ignite the light of faith through the medium of proper education and correct implementation of religious codes of conduct. However, the Sheikh's social reform policies were not popular with the affluent and educated ranks of society, those who had a vested interest in maintaining the status-quo vis-a-vis the weak and downtrodden, hence his efforts were met with stern resistance from some of the Hausa scholars who had sided with the King and his ministers.

Nevertheless, the king attempted to buy the Sheikh's loyalty with gifts and lavish proposals - all of which were rejected by Usman Dan Fodio in favour of literacy for all, revival of the faith and justice at the highest levels of governance.



PERSECUTION AND EXILE

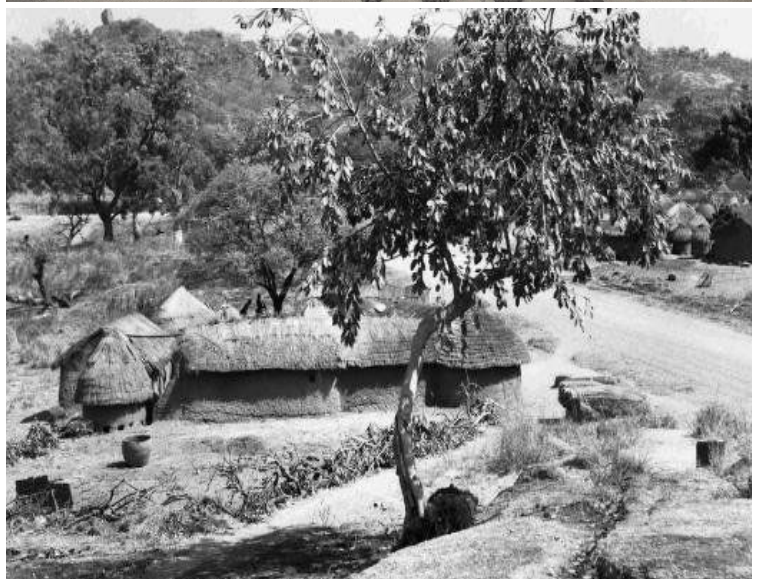
As his fame and appeal continued to grow it excited suspicion and fear among his adversaries, some of whom had subjected the Sheikh to an assassination plot followed by a mandate from the king forbidding the Sheikh and his followers from delivering any lectures or sermons in the city, they had also banned anyone from converting to the faith and ordered that all who had been initiated into Islam by means of conversion were to recant the faith at once, in fact king Nafata even outlawed the wearing of turbans, as this was reminiscent of the Sheikh's adherence to the example and tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu 'Aleihi wa Sallam) both in word and in deed.

HIJRA AND PERSECUTION

The persecution intensified under the new leadership headed by Shehu Usman Dan Fodio's former student, king Yanfu. By 1804 the tension escalated resulting in the Sheikh's exit from the city of Gobir. Usman Dan Fodio and his household left the city and found a safe haven in Gudu, towards the northern outskirts of the city where they sought shelter and safety with the local Fulani tribes.

However, in the Sheikh's absence his followers were suffering mounting persecution and abuse from the King and his administrators which prompted the Sheikh to pronounce a Fatwa - ruling that none should participate in an armed rebellion against the ruler despite his disbelief as this would only result in civil war and bloodshed, however anyone finding themselves under duress and no longer able to practice their religion freely under the King's reign should thereafter leave the city and migrate elsewhere.

Upon hearing this Fatwa many of the Sheikh's followers left the city to join him in the barren outpost of Gudu. This public act of defiance enraged and emboldened the ruling class in Hausaland to declare open war against the Sheikh and his followers both as revenge and in fear of a growing threat from the rising movement of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio, who had by now been elected *Amir-ul-Mumineen* by his followers.



BATTLES AND CONQUEST, SOKOTO EMPIRE IS FOUNDED

Anticipating what may become a large scale movement of revival and social reconstruction at the hands of Shehu Usman and his followers, the king of Gobir and other chieftains within Hausaland initiated a pre-emptive war which resulted in a series of battles and clashes that came to be known as the *Fulani war*. The struggle would last almost five years. Though some of the earlier battles were difficult and the Sheikh's army was inflicted with initial losses, they soon gained ground against their adversaries and eventually captured key cities such as Katsina, Kano, Zaria, Borno and Gabor – marking the end of the war and ultimate victory for Shehu Usman Dan Fodio and his followers.

Though military victory was finally attained, the human cost of war resulted in the loss of many brilliant men in the community and Usman Dan Fodio grieved at the loss of his disciples and friends who had sacrificed their lives on the battlefield so that the vision of social reform may become reality.

In honouring their sacrifice and setting the foundations of a more enlightened and egalitarian society, Shehu Usman Dan Fodio established the *Sokoto Caliphate* and appointed his brother Abdullahi Dan Fodio and his own son Muhammad Bello to take charge of the administrative and military duties while he implemented Islamic law and revived the founding principles of the faith by modelling his public and social policies after the illustrious example of the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu 'Aleihi wa Sallam) during his rule in the enlightened city of Al-Madinah.



DEATH AND LEGACY OF USMAN DAN FODIO

After having established the foundations for one of Africa's largest empires in less than five years, The great scholar and statesman returned to his duties as a spiritual guide by teaching people and by writing books. There are over one hundred manuscripts ascribed to Shehu Usman Dan Fodio covering a plethora of topics ranging from poetry to jurisprudence, creed, history and exegesis.

Shehu Usman Dan Fodio was also an outstanding advocate for women's education, issuing many religious and legal verdicts in favor of women seeking knowledge and in some cases the obligation of the endeavor even against the express prohibition of the men in his community, as was the example of the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu 'Aleihi wa Sallam) when he prohibited men from denying their wives attendance to the Mosques - which served as centers of learning, culture and spiritual refinement during his blessed lifetime.

Shehu Usman Dan Fodio spent his final days in Sifawa – situated on the outskirts of Sokoto. A scholar, military commander and an advocate for social reform. He passed away at the turn of the nineteenth century, aged sixty three years old.



GREAT MUSLIM LIVES



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SAYYID ABUL 'ALAA MAUDUDI (1903 - 1979)

LET US BE MUSLIMS

THE GREAT ADVOCATE

The author of outstanding publications numbering approximately one hundred books and a thousand essays. They have since been reprinted and translated into several languages. His legacy and influence continues to inspire and motivate unfolding generations of advocates and adherents to the core Islamic principles and orthodoxy in a world that is rapidly in favor of excluding religious thought and influence, in particular that of Islam - from the realms of public opinion and public policy.

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS

Aurangabad, the oft-celebrated town in the former princely state of Hyderabad has become noted in contemporary history for having been the birthplace of a remarkable champion of Islam. Born on September the 25th in the year 1903, Abul'alaa Ibn Ahmed Hasan Maududi entered the world into the ranks of a noble family whose ancestry has been traced back to some of the earliest proponents of Islam on the continent.

EDUCATION AND ASPIRATION

The young soul was early introduced to religious gatherings, rituals and literature. By the tender age of four years old, Abul'alaa was already praying his five daily prayers in the Mosque alongside his father.

Under his father's ever watchful eye, the young child had committed the entire Quran to memory and even memorized the Muwatta of Imam Malik. These remarkable skills were cultivated under strict conditioning and supervision of a dad who spared no effort or expense in ensuring that his son received the very best instruction and training from the comfort of his own home.

Abul'alaa Maududi continued to study privately until he reached the eighth grade at which point he was admitted into a high school in Aurangabad known as *Madrassa Furqaniyyah*. Although one of the youngest there, his academic performance rapidly distinguished him from his classmates.



HARDSHIP AND TRAGEDY

The prodigious child began translating classical texts at fourteen years old, his astonishing accomplishments at such an early age may have been the subject of substantial envy and resentment from his peers had he not already been known for his underprivileged socio-economic status and for the severe poverty stricken conditions that had afflicted him during his teenage years.

Driven by these appalling and desperate conditions, Abul'alaa's father departed from his home town and headed towards Bhopal in search of some business. Regrettably, this trip was yet another disappointment and became the cause for even greater suffering when his father succumbed to a fatal disease that resulted in paralysis leading to his death. Left with no inheritance and no estate to claim, the daily hardship of Abul'alaa's family grew in intensity and he subsequently discontinued his formal education for want of resources.

JOURNALISM, A NEW CAREER

However it would not be long after the death of his father when Abul'ala Maududi began to engage in paid work in order to support his relatives financially. The rising star was appointed to write for a leading Urdu newspaper in Madhya Pradesh, he was approximately seventeen years old by the time his skills as a journalist began to flourish. He was soon appointed to the post of editor for a publication called *Al-Jamia* which was at that time one of the most influential and respected journals among the Muslims in India.

His flourishing career in journalism had taken him to new and wonderful places as he worked his way up the ladder - in the year 1932, Abul'ala became the editor of a monthly publication known as *Tarjuman al-Quran* and in an effort that would demonstrate his dedicated and astonishing work ethic, Abul'ala took full charge of writing the articles, personally delivering the printed journals to each of his subscribers and collecting the payments on his bicycle – he continued to fulfil multiple functions all the while spending the entire night researching, typing and exploring subjects for the next issue to be published.

After many years of dedicated effort and industrious initiative, the articles and publications began to draw the attention and admiration from some of India's most respected intellectuals and notable leaders, among whom were the likes of Sir Muhammad Iqbal.



THE CALL OF DA'WAH

Although the people of India had formed a united front in their efforts to oust the British colonial administration in favor of sovereign rule that was to be representative of all Indians – regardless of creed. Abul'ala Maududi and a growing number of Muslim thinkers were soon disillusioned with the promise of a united India when what had previously been a gift and an advantage for the Muslims of India was now becoming a curse for they were largely outnumbered by the Hindu and Sikh populations whose representatives dominated the parliamentary seats and governmental posts.

He spent much of his time during the 1920s in the translation of classical Islamic texts as well as authoring his own essays and literature in Urdu. Perhaps one of his most notable work during that period came in the wake of popular rhetoric against Islam and the claim that Islam was spread by the sword, Abul'ala wrote his famous book *Jihad in Islam* wherein he explains the rules and principles of true Jihad, demonstrating the fact that Islam was spread far and wide by noble and exemplary means. The book was published in the year 1930 and became an instant classic across the Muslim world. It was highly acclaimed by Sir Muhammad Iqbal and Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar as well as Sheikh Hasan al-Banna of Egypt.

FOUNDING A NEW MOVEMENT

In the year 1938, Abul'ala Maududi met with one of India's foremost intellectual leaders – the much revered and oft-celebrated poet Sir Muhammad Iqbal, this auspicious encounter and meeting of great minds resulted in an invitation being extended to Abul'ala Maududi to migrate to East Punjab where his skills and experience would be of great service to the establishment and management of a newly built Islamic research center called *Darul-Islam*. Maududi accepted Iqbal's invitation and soon relocated with his family.

Regrettably, Abul'ala's project was prematurely disrupted when a dispute with the landlord concerning Abul'ala's firm condemnation of nationalism resulted in his expulsion from East Punjab – he subsequently relocated his entire team and the project to Lahore in 1939. However Abul'ala was hired and fired by the *Islamiyah College* of Lahore within a short period of less than a year resulting directly from his political views. Finally left with little alternative but to branch out on his own, Abul'ala Maududi established his own association in August 1941.

From the very beginning, the party had a registry of no more than seventy five members - many of whom were scholars and influential figures in Muslim India. The association was in essence a think-tank and at the head of it was Abul'ala Maududi – the founding father, chairman and chief ideologue who spent much of his time working towards the development and advance of the organisation.



STRUGGLE AND PERSECUTION

Maududi's new organisation was timely and necessary as the mounting ethnic tensions in India had reached its peak by 1947, a partition between India and the newly established Islamic Republic of Pakistan resulted from the efforts led by Sir Muhammad Iqbal and realized by Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Abul'ala Maududi like many of India's Muslim citizens had thereafter left India in order to settle in Pakistan, however the transition was not without its trials and horrors. Upon his arrival in Pakistan, the charismatic and outspoken advocate for Islamic identity began to call upon the newly elected government of Pakistan to establish a fully Islamic system of governance.

The delayed response and somewhat dismissive attitude of the political ruling class agitated and concerned Abul'ala who resorted to open criticism and opposition to the nationalistic and semi-secular policies favored by the successive governments of Pakistan. This was perceived to be a betrayal of the founding principles for which Pakistan was established and greatly at odds with the principles and vision of its most outstanding champion, the poet-philosopher Sir Muhammad Iqbal whose ideas and convictions were understood and shared by Abul'ala. Notwithstanding the validity and relevancy of Abul'ala's argument, Pakistan's political elite resolved to silence and punish any and all dissent by imprisonment. Abul'ala Maududi was not spared in this turn of events and experienced frequent arrest and imprisonment.

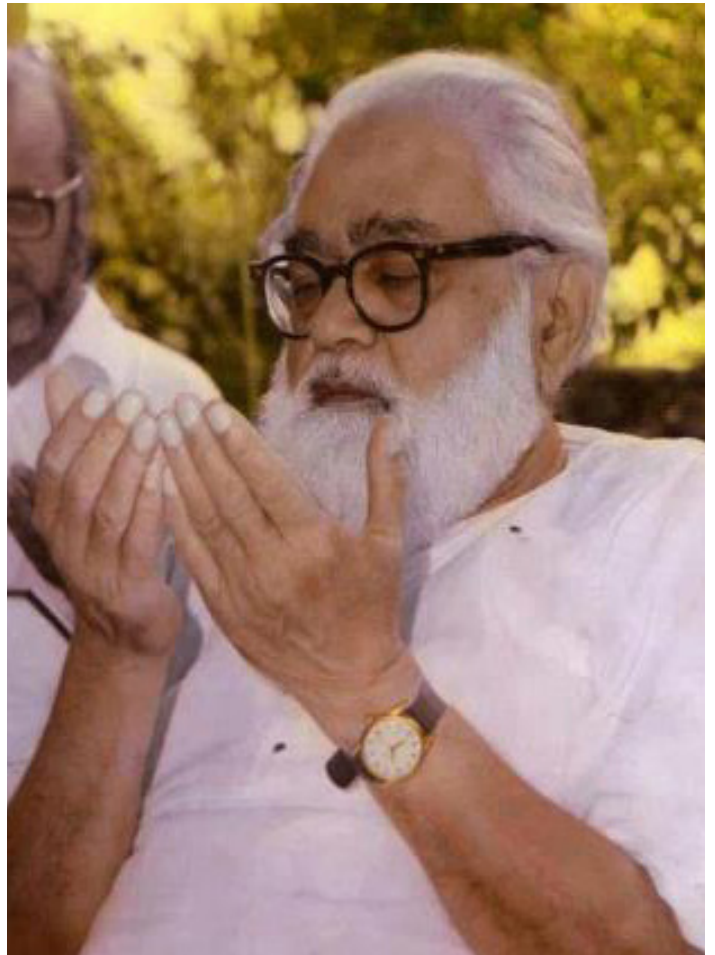
It is well known that his political struggle resulted in repeated arrests and prison sentences leading to a death sentence in the year 1953. Abul'ala Maududi refused to recant or plead for mercy when faced with the opportunity to seek pardon in court, his family supported him through the ordeal and the growing support from the Muslim community resulted in his ultimate release from prison.

PERSONAL LIFE, TRAVEL AND LEGACY

Abul'ala Maududi spent much of his life in the service of Islam, he suffered harm, poverty, rejection and imprisonment for his principles yet his efforts were not the least hampered by these trials and tribulations. His eloquent command of the Urdu language coupled with his fluency in Arabic, Persian and English made him a powerful and charismatic orator when he journeyed abroad to visit and lecture in several Muslim countries, participating in international conferences while visiting ancient sites in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Jerusalem, Syria and Egypt between 1959 and 1960, wherein he conducted a careful study into the geographical locations mentioned in the Qur'an.

Abul'ala Maududi's intellectual abilities earned him much admiration and honor in the holy land. He was thus chosen to be a founding member of the *Islamic university of Madinah* in 1962 where he also served on the *Advisory Committee* as well as serving on the original *Academic Council*.

In Mecca, Abul'ala Maududi was elected to join the committee of founding member for the *Muslim world league* while he simultaneously served on the board of the *Academy of Research on Islamic Law* in Madinah as well as being a recognized member of the *International Supreme Council of Mosques*. Maududi's contribution to Islamic revivalism in the twentieth century was ceremoniously recognized in the year 1979 when he was presented with the prestigious *King Faisal award* for service to Islam.



FINAL DAYS DRAW CLOSE

As the final chapter of this remarkable life story came to a conclusive end, As-Sayyid Abul'ala Maududi suffered from a chronic kidney disease that intensified leaving him bedridden for some time, thereafter he sought medical treatment in England and then the United States where his conditioned further deteriorated and he developed heart complications.

He was medically treated in New York in a hospital wherein his son served as a physician. However despite the efforts made to ameliorate his ailing condition, the battle was lost on the 22nd of September 1979 when he died following an operation. He was seventy six years old.

DR. FAZLUR RAHMAN KHAN (1929 - 1982)

TOWERING AMBITION

THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

America. Land of the brave, home of the free. A melting pot of languages, cultures and backgrounds where migrants from all corners of the world congregate and compete with one another in order to live the American dream.

American or not, dreams are elusive and often unattainable goals for the vast majority of dreamers. What may impede the realization of many dreams can often be blamed on external factors, circumstance or more severe elements, yet for a few very special and dedicated dreamers, there are no barriers too high, no walls too impenetrable and no obstacles too challenging.

As some would see it, why complain about the glass ceiling when you can design your own skyscraper.

CHILDHOOD IN BANGLADESH

It was in Dhaka, Bangladesh - one of the world's most populated cities, that among seven million inhabitants that an infant by the name of Fazlur Rahman Khan was born in the year 1929. The son of a high school teacher and author, the child grew up in a small village.

A bright and promising student, Fazlur Rahman worked his way through a Government high school and pursued studies at the *Bengal Engineering College* where he earned an undergraduate degree before embarking on a remarkable journey through academic ascendancy, commencing at the University of Calcutta, then Ahsanullah Engineering College and eventually graduating from -

- the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology culminating in his receipt of a Fulbright Scholarship and college funds awarded to him by the Government of Pakistan.

His hard work and passion for engineering had set him apart for distinction and resulted in an impressive list of accolades and awards, eventually leading to his migration to the United States in the year 1952.

TRAVEL AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Fazlur Rahman's hard work and commitment to his field of study did not wane or falter when he arrived in America, in fact he continued to perform with exceptional success. Now enrolled at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the young engineer was awarded two master's degrees and a Phd in just under three years. His mastery and proficiency in the fields of structural engineering theoretical and applied mechanics did not go unnoticed and he soon graduated into the world of construction and design.

He secured his first professional post in the year 1955, working for a firm in Chicago Illinois - commencing his career by working on several projects including the Chestnut De-Witt apartment building during the course of which he introduced new and effective design methods and concepts for more efficient use of architectural building materials. In recognition for his outstanding contribution on this project and subsequent assignments, Dr Fazlur Rahman was appointed to the board and became a partner in the firm just over a decade later, he also received full American citizenship.

The Dr. also worked on several buildings internationally. His novel and pragmatic approach to structural engineering literally changed the landscape of America - it was during the growth of an ageing population, mainly from among the baby-boomer generation of the 1950's - that concerns were being raised about the severe strain and constraints on land and buildings. Dr. Khan's response to these concerns was simple yet very revolutionary - *build vertically*.

A NEW MODE OF DESIGN

His advocacy and pioneering efforts in the design and construction of skyscrapers and tower blocks lead the world into a new era of structural engineering, quite literally changing the way cities would look and feel worldwide. It was his lateral thinking and aspirations that resulted in millions of home owners and office workers finding living and working space up in the clouds.

Dr Fazlur Rahman has been widely credited with the pioneering developments and innovative design techniques that are widely used in many of the most advanced cosmopolitan cities today. He spearheaded the renaissance in skyscraper construction during the second half of the twentieth century and was a pragmatic visionary establishing structural systems that subsequently formed the basis of the iconic design of high-rise buildings worldwide.

The succession of advanced concepts that Dr. Fazlur Rahman Khan initiated and later standardized for efficient design of high-rise construction in the 1960s and 1970s was validated in his own work, most noticeably in his design of the *John Hancock Center* in Chicago, a one hundred story building.

He also designed the famous *Sears Tower*, which at 108-stories high - stood as the tallest building in the world.



AWARDS AND TOWERING ACHIEVEMENTS

While working on the design and construction of the *DeWitt-Chestnut Apartments* in the earlier part of his career – Dr. Fazlur Rahman pioneered and introduced a new way of supporting tall buildings with less material and more effective fortification against wind and earthquakes in what became known as the tube-frame construction technique. He invented a new system and methodology that would become the standard practice worldwide – in fact, it was this very system that was used to build and design the foundations for the framed structure used in the construction of the *World Trade Center*.

A man of immense potential and vast intellectual abilities, he singlehandedly created the tools and platform for how buildings and cities are designed and built all over the developed world today.

He went on to create several variants of the structural tube design, these revolutionary techniques and principles were used to build several world class buildings such as the *Petronas Towers* and *The Citigroup Center*. Adaptations of Dr Khan's design blueprints have also been employed to build some of the world's tallest and most amazing skyscrapers, most notably the *Burj al-Khalifa* in Dubai.

Heralded the world over as a true pioneer and often times referred to as the *Einstein of structural engineering*, Dr. Fazlur Rahman's signature style and method permeates a very important part of our modern society.

While we marvel at the world's most technologically advanced cities and look up in amazement at the towering heights of the skyscrapers above our heads, few are aware of the influence and impact made by one man who had worked his from total obscurity and ascended all the way to the top of the tower.

CLASSIC CONTEMPORARY DESIGNS

His design and construction projects even include the famous Hajj terminal used by millions of pilgrims and visitors to Saudi Arabia via the *King Abdulaziz International Airport*, with its beautiful blend of traditional tent-like roofs and modern technology enabling it to withstand the harsh desert environment while its sophisticated and advanced engineering functionality enable the roof to fold neatly when not in use.

His astonishing work even includes the design of the *King Abdulaziz University* in Saudi Arabia, the *United States Air Force Academy* in Colorado Springs and the *Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome* in Minneapolis.

Dr. Fazlur Rahman's work was awarded several prestigious titles for his exceptional contributions to the science and aesthetics of design and construction, he also demonstrated in practical terms the virtue of excellence and commitment to one's craft and discipline, for despite his foreign origins and the obstacles that confronted him upon his arrival to the United States - he was able to rise above his contemporaries, peers and critics to reach new heights in the field of structural engineering.

His legacy remains as one of the most remarkable and enviable in his field today. Nominated a record five times by the *Engineering News-record* as an exemplar and champion of the construction industry, he became noted for his *Man of the Year Award* in the year 1972, an accolade that has been commemorated in a plaque at the Onterie Center. This lifetime achievement was followed a year later by his appointment to the *National Academy of Engineering*.

Several universities awarded him honorary degrees and his legacy is commemorated by the *Fazlur Khan Lifetime Achievement Medal* which was named after him by *The Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat*.



THE FINAL PROJECT

Dr. Khan's professional achievements are admirable and worthy of being an example to current and future generations seeking to leave a monumental and positive mark on the world around us.

Sadly, in 1982 the Dr. passed away after a cardiac arrest while he was in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. During the 53 years he lived, his mind blossomed and reinvented the living space around him, redefining the skylines across the leading cities of the world from America to Arabia.

PRIME MINISTER MOHAMMAD NATSIR (1908 - 1993)

EQUILIBRIUM

RECONSTRUCTION

The cataclysmic reverberations of Europe's two world wars heralded the destruction of her colonial grasp over the rest of the world as the combined forces of Britain, France and their allies channeled their military might to quell the growing fascist and Nazi threat back in Europe.

When the raging flames of war finally subsided, many of the once subjugated countries in Asia, Africa, Arabia and beyond - were finally liberated from the tyranny and exploitation they had previously been subject to at the hands of their Occidental masters. With the newly found independence now enjoyed by several nations in the Muslim world - there arose a new class of political candidates and budding intellectuals who were all working to help their countries rise up from the rubble of defeat to restore and re-build their homelands once more.

Quite unsurprisingly, many of the new candidates for leadership could only replicate and regurgitate the colonial policies and administrative agendas that so many people were already far too tired of. Conversely, there were growing voices calling for a return to Islam proper, these voices called for a re-affirmation of the faith and a rediscovery of its pure principles – not only within inner dimensions of private devotion but rather as a societal and political alternative to what was soon becoming an outdated and irrelevant western mode of governance.

From the republic of Indonesia, a voice was heard – and it spoke of the beauty of Islam, its magnificent governing system and the promise of success through the example of the Prophet Muhammad (*Salallahu 'Alaihi wa Sallam*). This evocative and eloquent invitation belonged to Muhammad Natsir – Indonesia's fifth Prime Minister and a celebrated son of Islamic revivalism following his country's independence from the Dutch.



BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS

Muhammad Natsir was a native of Minangkabau in West Sumatra. Born on the 17th of July in the year 1908, the infant became the pride of his parents. While his family belonged to the Minang ethnic group, his father - Muhammad Idris was favorably regarded in the local community for his virtues as was his wife Khadijah.

STUDIES AND FORMATIVE YEARS

At the age of eight years old, Muhammad Natsir's education began. Initially he was enrolled into both a secular school which he would attend during the daytime and at a traditional Madrassah which he would attend in the evenings. This dual commitment lasted for the better part of three years following which the young man was transferred to a junior high school situated in the capital city of West Sumatra province, he was accompanied by his older sister.

A gifted and bright student, Muhammad Natsir had earned a special place in his new school – which was then considered to be one of the most advanced academic establishments in Indonesia. By virtue of his intelligence and dedication to the course of study he was duly rewarded by the Government - having been awarded with scholarships during his secondary and senior years in high school.

Furthermore, Muhammad Natsir earned another scholarship in the year 1930 following his brilliant academic record, he was thus granted full admission to the Faculty of Law in Jakarta. The young man's future prospects were very promising and he was soon presented with the opportunity to travel abroad for further studies at the *Faculty of Economics* in Rotterdam - the Netherlands.

Though not unlike the vast majority of advocates for independence and sovereignty, as an intelligent and intellectually gifted luminary, Muhammad Natsir held the view that society could only advance and flourish through the medium of education and learning. In an act of exemplary merit and of a commitment to what he believed in, Muhammad Natsir returned to academia in the year 1931 to earn a teacher's license at a training college administered by the Dutch, he accomplished his educational objectives within a period of two years.

ISLAMIC ALTERNATIVES

In addition to his earlier Islamic studies back in West Sumatra, Muhammad Natsir took a deeper interest in the religion in his senior years at college.

It was during this period in his life that the young man also began getting involved in journalism – when he authored a number of publications on the subject of Islam, the Quran and the life of Prophet Muhammad (*Salallahu 'Aleihi wa Sallam*).

Believing that education was the backbone of society and the platform upon which the revival was to be built on, Muhammad Natsir proceeded to translate his thoughts into a practical course of action and this resulted in the establishment of an Islamic school between the years 1930 to 1942.

During this period of time, the institution enrolled students onto several courses from kindergarten to senior high school and teacher training academies. Heavily constrained and repressed under the harsh rule of the Japanese invaders, the school was closed down in the year 1942.



BEGINNINGS OF A POLITICAL CAREER

Inspired by the hope and prospect of reviving the Muslim spirit thereby empowering and eventually liberating the Indonesian people from the foreign influences, Muhammad Natsir soon volunteered himself as an active member of several political groups among which was *the Indonesian Islamic Party*, which he had joined in the year 1938 rising to become chairman of the Bandung bureau between 1940 until 1942 when he was later appointed to serve as the head of education until 1945.

INDEPENDENCE AND PRIME MINISTER

In 1945, Indonesian patriots seized the opportunity to throw off the colonial yoke of the Dutch and proclaim the nation's sovereignty, which was something that the Japanese had previously promised them. Following much sacrifice and struggle against the Dutch administration, the Indonesian people gained their independence following Indonesia's *Proclamation of Independence* which was delivered to the world at 10.00a.m on Friday the 17th of August 1945.



BECOMING PRIME MINISTER

A dedicated advocate and activist in the grass-roots struggle for Indonesian sovereignty, Muhammad Natsir rose to the rank of an elected representative in Indonesia's central national committee.

His spectacular progress through the political ranks soon earned him the appointment of prime ministerial office following a proposal which he had submitted on the 3rd of April 1950, this motion effectively united Indonesia following the prior conditions where Indonesia was split up into seventeen states. His appointment to the post of prime minister was in part due to his success in directing and chairing the widely popular Islamic party *Masyumi*, which was established following the proclamation of independence in 1945.

POLITICAL TURMOIL

President Sukarno, who became Indonesia's first Chief of State- and who was also the son of a school teacher - had fought relentlessly for the independence of his nation. The fact that he was previously imprisoned and exiled by the Dutch lends credibility to the historical claims of his collaboration with Japanese intelligence in organizing a Japanese-backed insurrection that subsequently culminated in the armed struggle against the Dutch.

Yet following Indonesia's independence, signs of subtle political rifts began to appear. President Sukarno's vision for the new republic and his political aspirations were not particularly Islamo-centric.

Furthermore, his complicit support for the *Indonesian Communist Party* instead of the Islamic party *Masyumi* directed by Muhammad Natsir - resulted in temporary upheaval during the late 1950s. Following-on from these turbulent developments, Muhammad Natsir's political party was banned and he was arrested then charged without trial. His imprisonment lasted between 1962 and 1964. After two years in custody, he was released by the government.

DA'WAH AND TRAVELS ABROAD

Muhammad Natsir's political party was subsequently disbanded so he spent much of his time working with the *Islamic World League* in Mecca, he was also active in England at the *Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies* as well as participating in the *World Muslim Congress* in Pakistan. A gifted linguist, Muhammad Natsir was conversant and fluent in several languages including English, Dutch, French, German, and Arabic.

However he was soon banned from travelling abroad due to his strong and persistent advocacy for Islamic causes and representation in the political realm notwithstanding his vocal criticism of the marginalization of Islam by politicians and state legislature to accommodate and appease various political stakeholders.

PRINCIPLED POLITICS

An unlikely political candidate given his unwavering commitment to religion, Muhammad Natsir derived passion and purpose from his understanding of the Quranic declaration stating that Jinn and Mankind were only created to worship God. This objective was to be translated into the active pursuit of political means by which Muslims in Indonesia would be able to fulfil the basic tenets of the faith while enjoying protection and preservation of religious culture and identity through the law. According to Muhammad Natsir, the spiritual dimensions of Islam cannot be divorced from the practical realities of the external world, both need to be maintained with balance and preserved through education and learning.



ACHIEVEMENTS AND LEGACY

Prime minister Muhammad Natsir's legacy is replete with high accomplishment and successive achievements. Towards the latter end of his life his efforts were celebrated and recognized in the year 1980 when he was presented with the *King Faisal Foundation award* for Islamic personality of the year. Previously, in 1967, he was also bestowed with an honorary doctorate degree from the *Islamic University of Lebanon* for his contributions to literature. He received another honorary degree in 1991 and was eventually bestowed with Indonesia's *National hero award*.

THE FINAL CHAPTER

Muhammad Natsir was a great advocate for the faith and a committed contributor for the common cause of his people. An open-minded and tolerant intellectual, he was distinguished from several political activists of his time due to the balanced and just approach with which he engaged the opposition, he was not one to promote blind hatred and animosity towards followers of different faiths. Muhammad Natsir's example and his career may serve as a template and a standard for the Muslim youth, particularly those who aspire for greater advocacy for Islam as an alternative and viable system of governance and law. Forever steadfast upon the path of Da'wah and revivalism, Muhammad Natsir continued to write on the subject of Islam right up to his final days, when he breathed his last in February 1993.

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